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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Sudan, Lebanon, Olmert's  
Visit to US, Iraq (5/17)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported the visit to Damascus by al-Sammani al-Wasila al-Smmani, Sudanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and his meeting with Vice President Shara who confirmed Syria's relief over signing the Abuja peace treaty. During the meeting Shara stressed Syria's support for Sudan as well as the Arab-African efforts to solve the Darfur issue. Both sides discussed the international situations and latest developments in the Arab arena.

On Lebanon, papers reported that President Lahoud's meeting with former Lebanese Minister Wadi al-Khazen, during which he reiterated the importance of continuing the Lebanese National Dialogue to find solutions to the pending problems and issues. President Lahoud said "dialogue is the only way to keep stability in the country." He called on all participants in the conference to offer all possible efforts and work seriously to achieve progress in the national dialogue. He also called for extending the agenda of the dialogue to include economic and social issues, asserting the importance of the participation of all the Lebanese in the economic and financial policy based on the outcome of general national reconciliation.

Papers also reported that the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party in Lebanon has underlined that Lebanon cannot isolate itself from its firm national and pan-Arab stances or from its position at the heart of the Arab-Israeli struggle. In a statement the party called for gearing all efforts and capabilities to face sedition plots targeting Lebanon. The statement also criticized honoring John Bolton, US Ambassador to the United Nations, by the so-called March 14th forces, "there is no justification for such honoring and such a step must only be received by condemnation," the statement added.

All papers reported that the Permanent Office of Arab Lawyers' Union expressed full support for Syria in the face of pressures and plots aiming to impose solutions of surrender upon Syria. A statement issued by the Union rejected any kind of politicization of the UN investigation into the crime that claimed the life of Rafik al-Hariri, "Syria's sovereignty should never be touched," the statement underlined. The office also expressed rejection of Zionist practices against Syrian citizens in the Golan and all

Israeli measures to annex the Golan.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"Vice President Shara and Sudanese FM Al-Sammani discuss the international situation and latest Arab developments. Shara confirms Syria's support of Sudan and expresses relief over the Aboja peace agreement" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/17)

"The presidency file is removed from the Lebanese National Dialogue agenda. The issue of Hizbollah arms is to be removed from the dialogue agenda too. Lahoud: Washington and Paris will not give preference to Lebanon over Israel" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/17)

"Al-Saniora rejects considering the anniversary of liberating south Lebanon as a national holiday" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/17)

"Iraqi PM Al-Malki finalizes his cabinet and will refer it to the Parliament today. Three US soldiers, 23 Iraqis killed in Baghdad" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/17)

"Olmert adopts misleading step prior to his visit to Washington. Abbas reminds the European Parliament of its commitments and confirms Israeli obstacles to peace" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/17)

"Palestinian PM Hanieh calls on Europeans to take courageous positions" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/17)

"Arab lawyers reiterate support for Syria and reject Zionist practices in the Golan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/17)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Why the Draft Resolution?"  
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Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (5/17): "What drives President Bush's administration to escalate its hostility toward Syria? And what are the dimensions of the American attempts to obtain a Security Council resolution calling for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon...?"

"Damascus repeatedly announced that its doors are open to everyone to examine the remaining small problems, including the demarcation of the border between the two countries. But some instigators wager on the foreign factor and fabricate escalation inside Lebanon and in Lebanon's relations with Syria. The climate of the previous national dialogue sessions reflected this and showed that these people are part of a plan that has been accurately prepared since the adoption of Resolution 1559 to link Lebanon to the Israeli-American alliance.

"Amid this tense climate inside Lebanon and in its relations with Syria, the US Administration finds its chance to proceed with its plan of fragmenting the region and tightening control over it, to fabricate problems and disputes and take them to the Security Council with a view to internationalizing even small issues like the demarcation of borders or the establishment of diplomatic relations.

"In addition to being an assault on the UN Charter and setting a serious precedent for the United Nations, whose resolutions are controlled by the world's only superpower, the draft resolution that was submitted to the Security Council is another American way to harm Syria and create problems with it.... Syria has always sought to implement UN resolutions to serve justice and safeguard the rights of nations. Needless to say, if those known resolutions had been implemented, there would have been no

crises in the region, crises caused by the occupation and the full American support for Israel.

"The US Administration never worked for the sake of Lebanon; its actions were always meant to serve Israel. This administration wants Lebanon to serve as a bridge for it to cross toward other targets that are no longer secret to anyone, especially at this delicate stage.

"Syria considers the draft resolution a blatant interference in Syrian-Lebanese relations, and it calls for vigilance amid this atmosphere where the Bush administration and Israel want to drag the region, including Lebanon, to the unknown."

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"Satanic Alliance"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/17): "The United States, as usual, will open its arms, eyes, ears, heart, and weapons arsenals to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert when he visits Washington next week...."

"The United States can love Israel as much as it wants. We have no right to interfere in its domestic affairs. But we, in return, ask President Bush not to interfere in our domestic affairs.... There are reports that Olmert will discuss with the US president the deployment of Lebanese Army in south Lebanon and the Iranian nuclear crisis and that he will link Iran, Syria, Hizballah, and the HAMAS-led Palestinian government...."

"We realize that Bush and his neoconservatives and the American

intelligence agencies will warmly welcome these Israeli priorities and adopt them as American priorities, because the American policy is cooked in the Israeli kitchen. We also realize that our modest demand -- noninterference in our domestic affairs in Syria and the Arab countries -- will fall on deaf American-Israeli ears. This is why we reject and denounce this hostile, satanic alliance...."

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